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Moscow's Bigger Star Wars Drive

By WILLIAM KUCERIEZ

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev recently intensified his propaganda campaign against President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, decrying it as a "voracious monster" and "fundamentally inhumane." Accusing the U.S. of an "arrogance of power," he said: "Many people everywhere are legitimately wondering why, by virtue of what right, should the whole world be held hostage to the SDI." "What we need," he said, "is Star Peace and not Star Wars."

What Mr. Gorbachev didn't say, of course, is that strategic defense has long been an essential part of Soviet military doctrine and that Russian scientists have been devising ballistic missile defenses for more than 20 years. In fact, according to the Central Intelligence Agency, the Soviets have outspent the U.S. on strategic defense since 1976 by a factor of 15 to 1.

The significance of what the Soviets appear to be up to is that it reflects a deliberate shift from deterrence, on which the nuclear balance of power has rested, to a war-fighting capability. This is the very thing they accuse President Reagan of doing with SDI.

As early as 1962, Marshal V.D. Sokolovskiy defined in "Military Strategy" the aim of Soviet strategic defenses: "They have the task of creating an invincible system for the defense of the entire country. . . . While, in the last war, it was sufficient to destroy 15%-20% of the attacking air operation, now it is necessary to assure, essentially, 100% destruction of all attacking airplanes and missiles."

'Counterbalance' Possible

Gen. Nikolai Tolenskiy, a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and former editor of the Soviet General Staff journal "Military Thought," added in 1965 that it was quite possible to "counterbalance the absolute weapons of attack." He said that "powerful deterrent forces and an effective antimissile defense system, when taken together, substantially increase the stability of mutual deterrence."

This view was reaffirmed shortly after the Soviet Union and U.S. signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 1972. Then-Defense Minister Andrei Grechko told the Soviet Presidium that the treaty "places no limitations whatsoever on the conducting of research and experimental work directed towards solving the problem of defending the country from nuclear missile strikes." More recently, of course, the Soviets have insisted upon a much narrower interpretation of the treaty in order to stymie U.S. research and development. At the same time, they maintain that their own ABM efforts don't in any way violate the accord.

The Soviets have spent heavily on strategic

defenses since the early 1960s. The CIA says that "over the last two decades, the Soviet Union has spent roughly as much on defense as it has on its massive offensive forces." This includes building a "city under a city" in Moscow to protect tens of thousands of key political, scientific and military personnel. Secret underground rail lines have even been constructed to evacuate the Moscow elite far outside the city, the CIA believes.

According to Defense Department and CIA estimates, Soviet expenditures on strategic nuclear defenses—apart from anti-aircraft and civil defense—have averaged \$15 billion to \$20 billion or more a year since 1970, dwarfing America's investment even with the Reagan SDI program. And this

be on borders and face outward (merely warning of an attack). But the Krasnoyarsk radar is oriented inward, covering some 2,500 miles of Soviet territory including key missile fields, and would be useful in resisting a strike.

The Soviets are also developing components of a new ABM system that allow them to construct individual ABM sites in a matter of months rather than years, according to a Defense Department report. It estimates that such mobile or component ABM systems could by the early 1990s be quickly deployed to strengthen Moscow's defenses or guard key areas in the western U.S.S.R. and east of the Urals.

The Soviets have also developed new surface-to-air missiles and tested them in

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Russian work has gone far beyond laboratory research and experimentation.

The Soviet Union has the world's only operational anti-satellite (ASAT) killers, and the only operational ground-based lasers aimed at blinding satellites in space and perhaps capable of knocking out incoming missiles. Soon, the Soviets could "break out" of the ABM Treaty and switch on a battle-management network of radars and interceptors covering all of the vital territory of the U.S.S.R. Such "territorial" defense, it should be noted, was what the ABM Treaty, for better or worse, was intended to preclude.

Since 1978, the Soviets have been upgrading their ABM system around Moscow, installing new tracking and battle-management radars and modernizing its missile interceptors at its 100 launch sites. In a gross violation of the 100-missile limit in the ABM Treaty, the Soviets' silo-based launchers are out of control and outside have been tested. U.S. intelligence officials expect the system to become fully operational next year.

More significant, the Soviets are building a widespread network of highly sophisticated radars able not only to track enemy warheads but also to guide ABM interceptors to destroy these incoming weapons. Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger said last week that the U.S. has spotted three new Soviet radars under construction, bringing to 12 the total number that appear to be part of a nationwide defense system. The radars are similar to one near Krasnoyarsk in south-central Asia; that radar in particular has been cited as a major violation of the ABM Treaty. The accord requires that all radars

an ABM-mode using their sophisticated air-defense radars. Moreover, the Russians are designing kinetic-energy weapons, which use the high-speed collision of heavy metal particles such as tungsten to kill an incoming warhead.

"Taken together, all of the Soviet Union's ABM and ABM-related activities are more significant—and more ominous—than any one considered individually," the Defense Department report concludes. "Cumulatively, they suggest that the U.S.S.R. may be preparing to deploy rapidly an ABM defense of its national territory, contrary to the provisions of the ABM Treaty."

American critics of SDI contend that the concern about Soviet strategic defense is overblown. They say that the Soviet radar systems and surface-to-air missiles are most likely intended to stop enemy aircraft rather than ballistic missiles, and thus are permitted under the ABM Treaty. Further, opponents of the Reagan SDI program maintain that the Soviets really aren't capable of deploying a Star Wars defense of their own. The Center for Defense Information, for instance, says that the Soviets aren't "competitive" with the U.S. in space-based defense technologies. It adds, "Claims that the Soviets might beat us into space with an SDI of their own are vastly overstated and do not justify the current U.S. development program."

But senior Soviet scientists have gone far beyond radars and anti-ballistic missiles to expand strategic defenses using new directed-energy technologies such as lasers, particle beams and microwaves. These types of weapons cripple the delicate internal mechanisms of booster rockets and nuclear warheads. According

to the CIA, Russia has devoted far greater resources to this work than the U.S. over the past decade or more. Indeed, the Soviet directed-energy program is led by Yevgeniy Velikhov, a vice president of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and deputy director of the Kurchatov Atomic Energy Institute. He is also chief science adviser to Mr. Gorbachev, whom he has known since their days in college together.

"In directed energy technologies, the Soviets are in a comparable, or highly competitive, position with respect to the United States," the CIA says. "In laser technologies, there is an essential equivalence, though the Soviets are pursuing some types of lasers which the U.S. has either abandoned or has ignored for weapons applications. In particle beam and microwave technologies, the Soviets may have the edge over the U.S. in some important areas."

The Soviets have already begun to develop and test laser weapons. They have built "over a half dozen" major R&D facilities and test ranges, with an estimated 10,000 scientists and engineers associated with the laser-weapons program, says the CIA. A U.S. reconnaissance satellite recently spotted two more large laser facilities being built on mountaintops near the Soviet-Afghanistan border. Some analysts believe that these laser sites may be used to attack U.S. satellites and could be upgraded with new tracking radars to knock out ballistic missiles.

Disinformation Campaign

The Soviet political leadership and such scientists as Mr. Velikhov deny any of this advanced Soviet SDI work. They maintain that all Russian efforts are only "point defenses" around Moscow or other work permitted by the ABM Treaty.

Meanwhile, Moscow has pursued an aggressive disinformation and propaganda campaign against Mr. Reagan's SDI program. The U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency has detailed these Soviet efforts in a new report. It says that the Soviet Union has prevented an "honest dialogue" on SDI "by refusing even to acknowledge that it is engaged in researching advanced strategic defense technologies. The Soviet position cannot be taken seriously. Indeed, it must be understood for what it is—a cynical tactic to avoid accountability and to gain a unilateral advantage over the United States."

Moscow takes seriously the potential for strategic defense. Kremlin pronouncements to the contrary are only an attempt to kill off U.S. SDI development while the Soviet Union gets ready to field its own multilayered strategic defense network.

Mr. Kuceriez is a member of the Journal's editorial board.

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